

SELECTIONS
OF
POEMS AND PROSE

FROM THE WRITINGS OF
CHARLES L. BILLINGS

OF
LIVERMORE, MAINE



FARMINGTON, ME.
The Knowlton & McLeary Co., Printers
1912

21

From
Mrs. C. W. Keyes
Farmington
Me.

SELECTIONS
OF
POEMS AND PROSE
FROM THE WRITINGS OF
CHARLES L. BILLINGS
OF
LIVERMORE, MAINE

FARMINGTON, ME.
The Knowlton & McLeary Co., Printers
1912

PC 1092
II 85
172

2.
Lyle
Mrs. C. H. Deane
J. 12 '13

21



CHARLES L. BILLINGS

In Memoriam

CHARLES LORING BILLINGS

1841-1866

BETWEEN the two dates given above was lived a life of many noticeable virtues and one that is held in tender remembrance by all who had knowledge of it at any stage of its existence.

Charles Loring Billings, whose life was measured by the interval between April 15, 1841, and August 25, 1866, was born in Fayette, Maine. He was the fifth of the seven children born to Jesse and Harriet (Walton) Billings, who, when Charles was a small child, removed to Livermore, where most of his life was passed. He came of good New England lineage in various lines, his ancestry including one or more who fought for the National independence and others who bravely bore their part in the work of pioneers in the wilds of Maine. Many of them were of strong physique as well as vigorous minds, but while he inherited the moral worth and the intellectual powers of the best endowed among his people, he was from childhood very frail in body, suffering from a hip disease which caused him great pain and obliged him to use a crutch a large portion of his life.

Nature was, nevertheless, kind to him and though denying physical strength, she gave him gifts of mind and heart that rendered him able to find much enjoyment in life and made him a delightful acquaintance and friend. He was especially fond of books, and, unable to engage in outdoor pursuits or sports, good reading was a never-failing source of entertainment. He also enjoyed putting his own thoughts into writing and was a contributor to several Maine papers—perhaps for the most part to the *Maine Farmer*. The articles published herewith are selections in prose and verse from his published writings.

In the issue following his decease the Farmer had this notice:

“Died at Canton Mills, August 25 [1866], Charles L. Billings of Livermore, aged 25 years. The deceased had been an invalid for many years and was thus debarred from participation in the duties of active life. He was a young man of excellent character and fine literary attainments, many of his contributions to the columns of this paper being marked by superior ability.”

The moral excellence of Mr. Billings was well known to his friends and acquaintances. It was marked by honor, fidelity to friends, unselfishness and other qualities that ennoble life. They may be judged by the following rules of conduct formulated the New Year's preceding his death and found among his private papers after his decease.

Resolutions for This Year:

Monday, January 1, 1866.

- 1 — I will at all times speak the exact truth.
 - 2 — I will use no profane language, drink no tea, coffee or spirituous liquors, nor use tobacco or opium in any form.
 - 3 — I will carefully avoid speaking ill of others.
 - 4 — I will use every effort to cultivate firmness and perseverance.
 - 5 — I will, upon retiring at night, think over all the acts of the past day.
 - 6 — I will read the above resolutions once a day.
- May I prove true to these resolutions.

CHARLES L. BILLINGS.

The remains of the deceased are buried beside the graves of his parents in the pretty cemetery at Brettun's Mills, Livermore, Maine. His memory abides in the hearts of kindred and friends.

NATURE'S INFLUENCE.

SLOWLY the evening shadows veil
The landscape from my sight,
And rock and woodland fade away
Before the coming night.

The sky glows with the rising moon,
While, from the hill beyond,
The sombre pines are mirrored on
The dark and silent pond.

Still as the dawning of the world
The woods and waters lie,
Only, at intervals, there comes
The loon's wild, mournful cry.

These hours of solitude possess
A power undefined ;
And every scene in nature leaves
Its impress on the mind.

When, fresh, the morning breezes blow,
And flush the morning skies,
Light as the bird that greets the dawn,
Our joyous spirits rise.

But when the shrouding darkness falls
Around each cherished spot,
Then falls the deep hush on the heart,
To calm its troubled thought.

¹LETTIE PIERCE'S STORY.

OLD Herbert, the drunkard! how well I remember him! We called him old, but his was not the old age which, like the calm evening of summer, succeeds the noon of life with the temperate and virtuous. In the thin, gray hair, palsied, trembling hand and feeble, tottering footstep, were visible the ravages, not of time, but of dissipation. Day after day the miserable man sat in the grogshop, stupefied with liquor, or lay drunk upon his bed in the home to which his presence should have been a blessing, but of which it was the curse. Sometimes, on rainy days, we used to see him returning from an excursion to the pond, with a few fish, which were sold to procure the means of gratifying his debasing appetite for strong drink. When we little children happened to meet him, we drew aside from the road, and, timidly holding each other by the hand, whispered, "Here comes old Herbert!" For we had heard dreadful stories of his abusive treatment of his wife and child; how, coming home on winter nights, he had many a time, in his drunken frenzy, beaten them and thrust them out of doors, where, thinly clad as they were, and almost perishing with cold, they had remained for hours, not daring to return until silence within told that the wretched husband and father had fallen asleep.

The fiery poison which his depraved appetite demanded had done much to enfeeble the brain and sear the conscience of its victim, yet in his rational moments the degraded man seemed keenly to feel the depth of his own

¹ Published in the *Maine Farmer*, December, 1865.

degradation. He walked with bowed head and downcast eyes, seldom entering the house of a neighbor, and rarely speaking unless first accosted. Thus, shunned and feared by innocent children, an object of pity to the humane and of ridicule to the heartless, and a terror to his own family, the poor inebriate dragged out his dreary existence.

There were intervals when the unhappy man seemed to contend with all his strength against the terrible appetite that enthralled him. Then, for two or three days, he would be seen at work in his garden, or making some repairs upon his house. At such times much of his former kindness to and love for his wife seemed to return, his conduct toward her was affectionate, though humble, and he appeared proud and fond of his little son. Then it was that something of his true nature appeared, for, poor and fallen as he now was, Thomas Herbert had once enjoyed prosperity and esteem. No handsomer or more manly bridegroom, they said, ever entered the village church than he when he led Mary Willis to the altar; nor ever couple commenced life with brighter prospects. It was the old, sad story. The demon intemperance, that, like the fiend in the Eastern story, came at first in the shape of a tiny insect, had grown to a mighty dragon, and was strangling his deluded votary. Friends had become estranged, health and happiness were destroyed, and property had passed, little by little, into the hands of that most active and faithful purchasing agent for the devil, the rumseller.

Mary Herbert, the drunkard's wife, was a pale, patient woman, still retaining much of the beauty that in her girlhood had made her the belle of her native village.

Through years of poverty, trial and shame, she had steadily resisted the entreaties of her friends, who offered her a comfortable home on condition of a separation from the besotted being whose wife she was. "He is my husband," she said, "I cannot leave him;" and day and night she labored for his support and that of her only child, a noble, handsome little fellow eight years of age, the idol of his mother. Many a present was made her by her neighbors, though of small individual worth; for they knew that anything of sufficient value would be carried off and bartered for rum by the drunken husband. The small, unpainted house in which they lived was clean as hands could make it, and bright-hued flowers blossomed in the little dooryard, evincing a love of the beautiful that not even penury and misfortune like hers could crush out.

Frank Herbert, my little playmate, two years older than I, was my boy lover. Whether we played by the hazel-shaded brook, casting sticks and leaves on its bright surface to see them carried over its miniature cascades, or gathered acorns and beechnuts in the woods through the warm, golden hours of Indian summer days, or sought for wild flowers and green velvet-like mosses, we were still companions. Whatever of childhood's joys or sorrows we might have, each found a ready and sympathizing friend in the other. Sometimes Frank would come to me crying bitterly: "O Lettie, he strikes mother, and I am afraid he will kill her!" and then I would try every way to console him, though crying myself from sympathy. Even at this tender age there were many ways in which Frank managed to be of assistance to his mother. He attended school both summer and winter; his mother working hard to

give her son the advantage of a good education. Frank was quick to learn, and with his mother for a teacher during vacations, was in advance of most children of his age. The summer preceding the winter that Frank's father died, when I was six years old, was my first term at school, whither I went, as usual, with my little playmate. I remember how longingly I used to glance out at the window of the dingy little schoolroom into the open, sunlight fields of waving grass, listening to the bob-o-link's song, as he swayed to and fro on the elm boughs, and waiting for the hour of four, that seemed as if it would never come. And when the glad word of release was given, and we were once more free as the swallows that skimmed over the field, we returned home together, stopping to watch the fishes playing in the brook, or the gay-winged butterflies circling around the pink blossoms of the thistles that grew by the hot, dusty road. So the long summer wore away. The sultry days of August came, and our school was finished. Then we were free to play again, and the time passed rapidly and pleasantly by till the leaves were fallen from the woods, the days grew short and cold, cattle came to the barns, the boys put on their new thick boots, and the winter schools were commencing.

It was in December that Frank's father died. The weather had been intensely cold, though the ground was yet bare. The sun shone out faintly from the dull, leaden sky, but his feeble beam contained no warmth. At length the storm commenced in all its fury. I remember how I stood at the window, watching the driving clouds of snow, and pitying those whose business called them abroad. All that night, the next day and the next night, the storm

continued to rage. On the second night of the storm old Herbert disappeared. The last that had been seen of him was when he left the rum-shop, late at night, to return home. Search was made and his body was found in a piece of woods adjoining the road. In the bewilderment of intoxication he had strayed from the road and sinking down in the snow, had fallen into a sleep from which he never woke.

Relieved from the burden of her drunken husband's maintenance, Mrs. Herbert's prospects became brighter. She had only herself and son to provide for now; the product of her labor at the needle supplied their simple wants; and Frank was growing up to be the stay and solace of his idolized mother. As time passed on, and with increasing age and strength, Frank was able to do more and more toward their support, we were less together; but he was always the same noble, manly boy, kind and cheerful, and I loved him like a brother.

Six years passed away, and it was early winter again. Then came what was to me a great event, my first visit to my rich merchant uncle in the city, twenty miles distant. It was a visit which had long been promised me, and to which I had looked forward with great anticipations; for cities and city life were known to me only by report. Father and I were to have an early breakfast, and be on the road before light, as we were to return the same day. So, while the bright sunset gave promise of a fair day for our journey, I sat beside mother and chatted to her of the pleasure which the morrow would bring. Dear mother! it was seldom enough that her household duties allowed of her leaving home, but I am sure she would not have found

half the pleasure in making the visit herself that she took in seeing her little girl happy.

My dreams that night were light and joyous ; and whenever I awoke, it was with a recurring sense of something pleasant in store for me. And soon, I heard the old corner clock striking five, and mother's soft voice calling me. I was quickly attired for my ride, as every article of wardrobe had received the most critical attention for a week previous. Our breakfast awaited us, and father's overcoat was warming at the fire. I was all in a flutter of excitement, and secretly wondered how father could be so calm and self-possessed. Our arrangements were at length completed ; my brother John brought up our horse, with bells jingling musically on the keen, crisp air ; mother held the lamp for us at the door ; we said good-bye, and were off. Through the still, shadowy woods ; down into the hollow, where the brook, not yet frozen, had thawed dark caverns in the snow ; on past the old schoolhouse, we pursued our way along the old road Frank and I had so often traveled. Then the stars paled their light and darted, one by one, down the sky ; the snowy summits of the hills were flushed with rosy light ; and the sun rose gloriously. Now the bells tinkled faintly as our horse walked slowly up a long hill, then they sung out a right merry chime as he dashed down its declivity, shattering the frozen snow into spray that scintillated in the bright sun like a shower of diamonds. White columns of smoke were rising from the chimneys, and passing by one neat farmhouse, whose occupants seemed to be early risers, we saw bright, young faces at the window looking out on the road. We had long since entered upon a region unknown to me, which became

more thickly settled as we proceeded. As the morning advanced, we began to be met or overtaken by other teams. Farmers were watering their stock ; and groups of boys were collected around the schoolhouse doors.

The hands of the town clock were pointing to the hour of ten when we entered the city and drove through the busy streets to Uncle John's handsome residence. The long ride through unfamiliar scenery, combined with the many unwonted sights and sounds, had produced in me a kind of bewilderment ; so that I moved and felt like one in a dream. Even my aunt's warm welcome and soft kiss could not entirely dispel the feeling of unreality until Uncle John came in with father, and kissing me, took me on his knee as in his visits to us, and began to chat with us about the old place.

I need not dwell upon the incidents of our visit at Uncle John's, nor tell how greatly I enjoyed it ; but when father and I returned home. I had an offer to communicate to mother. My uncle and aunt were childless ; and they had offered to place me at an excellent school in the city on condition of my making my home with them. I was overjoyed at the proposal, for father had given his consent, and I knew that mother, though she would be sad at the thought of my leaving home, would not let her love for me stand in the way of my obtaining a better education than our country schools afforded an opportunity for acquiring.

So the matter was arranged. The following June I took leave of my friends, and went away to the city ; and in the prosecution of my studies four years wore quickly away. During that time I was often at home ; and the stage never brought me in sight of the old farm, with its brown, cosy

buildings, its orchard of gnarled, mossy trees, and the clear pond at its back, that I did not feel my pulses quicken with delight. Whenever I visited home, one of my first calls was always upon Mrs. Herbert. It was pleasant to see how the loving care of her son and the relief from toil which his exertions had procured her, had brought back the bloom to her cheek, and the light to her eye. Their home was comfortable and pleasant now; the house had received a coat of paint and an addition of green blinds; while an arbor of luxuriant grape-vines and a neat, white paling in front had so changed its appearance that one would hardly have recognized the place. Frank was at work by the day for the farmers in the neighborhood; and nothing that his labor could procure or his loving care provide, was ever wanting to his mother's comfort and happiness. He was tall and stalwart now, almost a man; but with the same cheerful smile, the same noble, unselfish spirit. When I came home at vacation Frank never failed to call and see me in the evening, after his day's work was done, to learn how I was prospering at school.

Well, as I said, four years passed by and my education was completed. I believe that my education differed much from that which is usually acquired by girls at the fashionable boarding schools, and which consists principally in learning to paint flowers in unnatural colors, and pronounce French words wrong. But I was always rather matter-of-fact in my views; and my education partook more of the plain and practical, than the elegant and useless.

It may seem the more strange on this account, indeed, I wonder now myself, that I should fall in love with the

one whom I did. But I believe, after all, that I was not half so deeply in love with him as I persuaded myself; though I was dazzled by his elegance, and pleased by attentions which made me envied by all the girls of my acquaintance as silly as myself. Ross Carleton was the son of a wealthy merchant. He was tall, graceful and handsome, with jet black hair and moustache, dressing always with most exquisite taste, and possessing a talent for music, poetry and the fine arts generally. An only child, he had never known an ungratified wish; and being a pleasant companion, he was a general favorite and in great request at social gatherings and evening parties. He was a frequent visitor at Uncle John's, where I first became acquainted with him. We attended balls, operas and concerts; read, walked, rode and sang together; and at last I began to be, or fancy myself in love with him. And so, when Ross came to make a declaration of love for me, I acknowledged that it was returned, and thought myself happy in its possession. This was at the close of the second summer after my leaving school, when I was going home to spend the fall and winter. It was arranged that the following spring my lover should visit us, when we were to make our attachment known to my parents and ask their consent to an engagement; for I could never think of engaging myself without their knowledge. When I said so to Ross I was for a moment surprised and hurt by the impatient, petulant tone of his reply, so different from his usual agreeable manner; but it was soon forgotten.

In the drawer of my writing-desk, among letters and keepsakes, I have a bunch of small, withered wild grapes,

pinned to a card on which is written "The Island Excursion." I will tell you about it.

I had been having great times helping mother in my awkward way, about house, going fishing, picking apples and husking corn with father and John, and amusing myself in a variety of undignified ways, so that, almost before I knew it, the last days of October had come. One evening Frank came in to see us in company with Annie Lyman. Annie was my schoolmate, and one of my most intimate friends; a pretty, lively girl whom I more than suspected John looked upon as his future wife. While the four of us sat talking and laughing in the parlor, John laid before us for approval, a project that he had formed of making an excursion to Cherry Island the next day. This is an island of about thirty acres extent in the river some two miles below. John proposed that we should walk the mile and a half to the river across the fields; then, as one of the farmers there with whom we were acquainted had a large boat which we could obtain, we would row to the island, taking our dinner with us, and spend the day. A small tract upon the island had been cleared for grass, but the remainder was covered with a heavy growth of timber; and a lumberman's camp where men had worked the winter before, was specified as our dining-hall. The project was received with approbation by the entire company, and arrangements were at once made to carry it into effect.

We made a merry party when we set out the next morning upon our walk across the fields to the river. It was one of those mornings in our perfect Indian summer weather, when the woods are almost bare; when squirrels

rustle among the thick-strewn leaves as they gather in their winter hoards; when the partridge comes out on the sheltered side of the wood to bask in the bright morning sun. The clear blue sky was unflecked by a single cloud; a soft, dreamy haze overspread the landscape; there was a clamorous meeting of crows over the hill, and the blue-jays were flitting through the groves.

We crossed the brook on an *Al Sirat* of a single log, and stopped under an oak to gather the acorns that John and Frank brought down in a perfect hailstorm by throwing clubs into the tree. Then, dispatching John as envoy to Mr. Clark's, Frank, Annie and I started in a foot race down to the bank of the river. The boat lay there, chained to the root of a leaning tree undermined by the current, and half filled with leaves. John came down with the key to the padlock on the boat's chain; the water, which a rain of a few days previous had left in the boat, was bailed out; Annie and I seated ourselves astern; John and Frank took the oars, and we floated down the river—Annie amusing herself by throwing acorns at John, who retorted by splashing her liberally with his oar. The low, flat bars of yellow sand, that had been left bare by the summer drouth, were submerged now, for the fall rains had raised the river up to the leafless thickets of willow along its banks. But the water was smooth as a mirror; and when our oarsmen paused from their labor, and allowed the boat to drift with the current, our motion was imperceptible. The day grew warm. From the depths of the neighboring woods came the muffled drumming of a partridge, and two hawks were sailing in majestic circles overhead.

We landed in a little cove of the island, and made our way up through the woods to the small cleared space in which the camp was situated. It was a rude structure, with walls of rough logs, a small door opening outward on the south, and sloping shed roof of bark, half hidden by the growth of shoots, many of them retaining their leaves, which had sprung up from the stumps of trees during the summer. Inside, there was a long seat extending across the cabin, formed of a plank hewn from a log and supported on stakes driven into the ground, and rude bunks filled with straw, were ranged around the sides. On the north wall there was a bit of looking-glass, fastened to the logs by means of wooden pegs, with a small shelf below it for combs and shaving apparatus. At the east end of the camp was a huge fireplace formed by piling rough rocks against the logs of the wall, and covering them with earth—a large opening having been left in the roof for the passage of the smoke. In this, more for appearance than comfort, John and Frank kindled a large fire; and as we sat at our lunch, while the flames lighted up the camp, we could imagine how welcome a retreat it must have been when the great trees were creaking and groaning in the cold wind of a winter evening, as the teamster drove home his wearied team, with clinking chains, and the red-shirted choppers returned to camp.

Our dinner being dispatched, it was agreed that we should go to the opposite side of the island and separate, one couple going in one direction and the other in the opposite, so as to make the circuit of the island, meeting at the boat. So, leaving John and Annie to pass around the northern end, Frank and I pursued our way along the

edge of the island, over beds of crisp, gray moss and spurs of projecting ledge.

On the south end of the island, in a sunny, sheltered nook of the woods, there is a high, steep rock under the branches of a large hemlock tree, up which, with Frank's assistance, I climbed. Its flat summit, strewn with the dead leaves of the hemlock, afforded us a seat, and from a vine that clung to a small maple tree growing beside the rock, I gathered this cluster of grapes, which I keep as a memento of the day. And, sitting there in the warmth and stillness of that mellow, October day, gazing far down the blue, winding river, I first heard from Frank's lips the confession of his love for me, and knew that I must pain that noble heart by a denial of the return which he asked. It was an unexpected revelation. I had not dreamed of his loving me otherwise than as an intimate friend. And yet, how sweet it was to know he loved me! I believe I had not learned my own heart then.

"Oh, Frank!" I cried, bursting into tears and taking his hands in mine, "I am so sorry I did not think of this sooner! But indeed I had no idea that you thought of me otherwise than as the girl who has been your playmate and friend. I am afraid you will think I have been trifling with you, and that in rejecting your love, I have forfeited your friendship."

Frank's voice was tremulous with the emotion he so bravely tried to conceal, since he knew it would add to my distress; but his own generous spirit spoke in the reply: "No, no, Lettie! I know the dear little girl who has been my true friend so long, too well to think so badly of her. Let us be friends, as we have been; and do not let

the thought of this make you unhappy. My wishes will always be for your happiness, and I shall prize your friendship as much as ever. I ought to be content with being esteemed worthy of its bestowal."

We sat for a long time in silence, then descended from the rock, and pursued our way around to the boat, where we found John and Annie awaiting our arrival, and wondering what had detained us. I think something in our manner must have given them an intimation of what had taken place, and that they felt troubled on that account, for both were unusually silent, and I observed that Annie, who was always the life and soul of a party, looked thoughtful and anxious. Our return home was marked by a seriousness little in keeping with the character of a party of pleasure; and the few weeks that followed, I count among the most unhappy days of my life more than commonly exempt from care.

Through the winter months my companions upon the island excursion were my pupils in reading the *Æneid* of glorious Maro. All three were apt scholars, accomplishing much more in the same time than a large proportion of my fellow students in the city. And it is a remark I may be allowed to make even here, that I have found scholars in the country, attending school from sixteen to twenty weeks in the year, generally in advance of those in the city, whose yearly attendance amounts to more than twice that. I cannot but think it a mistaken zeal on the part of parents, that obliges attendance upon the public schools for so large a portion of the year; and that the cause of education would be better promoted, as the cause of health would certainly be, by prescribing shorter terms and sessions.

Our recitation room was the old kitchen, with its spotless floor, and fire of crackling logs. Frank and John were both hard at work during the day, cutting wood to fill a contract they had taken in company ; but in the long evenings we met for our exercise. Annie was as wild, roguish, and full of frolic as ever, and Frank, although I knew how cruel a blow the dissipation of his hopes must have been to him, bore up bravely ; so it was a pleasant winter, after all.

March came, and on the day appointed my elegant lover arrived from the city. We had corresponded frequently since I had been at home, and my parents were prepared to see him. They received him kindly and cordially ; but I was mortified and grieved by the air of superiority and condescension visible in his manner, as if he were conferring the highest of honors in vouchsafing them a visit. Father and mother, however, did not seem to notice this, but made him welcome by every means in their power.

Late that evening father received a summons to the parlor. No doubt he had divined for what purpose his presence was requested, but he looked grave as we told him of our attachment to each other, and asked his consent to an engagement. How much I owe to his wise foresight, and solicitude for my welfare ! Surely, my indebtedness is greater than the most devoted affection can repay !

“ Mr. Carleton,” he said, “ I have much confidence in my daughter ; but you will pardon my saying that I consider your acquaintance insufficient to warrant an engagement. You are a stranger to me, and it is natural that I

should desire to know more of the man with whom I am to entrust the happiness of my daughter. With that view, I would ask that you make it your home with us for a fortnight. We should be happy to have the pleasure of your company, and I promise you my decision at the end of that time."

The proposal was assented to, though with a very bad grace, by my elegant lover, and I soon began to find how unsuited we were to be companions for life. Either he must have thought highly of my forbearance, or as is more probable, his affection for me was not strong enough to induce him to reform the habits of indolence and apathy which had become second nature to him; though I think he loved me as well as a nature so intensely selfish was capable of doing. He passed the time lying on the sofa in the parlor, smoking, yawning and sleeping, or sneering at our country fashions, and bewailing his exile from the city. There were splendid mornings when the young people of the neighborhood were out on the crusted snow for sliding, or a walk to the sugar camps; but he could never be persuaded to join them. But what annoyed and mortified me more than all the rest, was the disrespectful and supercilious manner of his behavior toward my parents and friends. His indolent and effeminate habits, I might have borne with; but to see those whom I loved and respected treated as his inferiors, was too much.

The tenth day of his stay with us, Mrs. Wilson, one of our neighbors, came in to make us a call, and I took her into the parlor, where, as usual, my elegant lover was lounging upon the sofa. Without rising from his reclining posture, he acknowledged my introduction by the slightest

possible bow and a haughty stare, while I felt my cheeks flush with indignation at the insolence of his demeanor. Throughout my conversation with Mrs. Wilson, his ill-breeding displayed itself in winks and grimaces at every odd or ungrammatical expression used by our visitor, a worthy lady, much respected by all who knew her.

At the end of half an hour, during which I could hardly keep back the tears that shame and anger were forcing to my eyes, Mrs. Wilson rose to go. I accompanied her to the piazza, bade her good day, and then went back to the parlor.

"Mr. Carleton," I said, "I have come to tell you that we must part."

He started up in amazement at my words and manner, for I had spoken in earnest.

"Lettie, you don't mean that!" he exclaimed.

"I do mean it, Mr. Carleton. I will never marry any man who would have me blush for my friends. The past few days have shown me your true character; and I thank Heaven that I have escaped such wretchedness as would have been my lot in becoming your wife."

These were my last words with him; and the stage conveyed him to town the next morning. I hear that he has married a rich and fashionable wife, and is living in great style on her money. Well, I do not envy her!

One year from that time came the fall of Sumter, the grand uprising of the loyal North to avenge the insult offered to the Government, and the commencement of those four most terrible years in our country's history. And when Frank left us to take part in the struggle for our national life, it was with my promise given him, and my

kiss on his lips. In the fever-stricken swamps of the Chickahominy, along the lone bayous of the Red River, among the veterans whom the invincible Grant led to victory against the foes of Liberty and Justice, my brother and lover have marched and fought side by side, while we at home have, many a time, listened in agonizing suspense to catch the tidings from Southern fields, not knowing but our dear ones might be lying, stark and gory, among their slain comrades. But God in His mercy has spared them to us ; and when glad bells ring in the joyous New Year, I shall call Frank husband, and Annie sister.

OUR HOPE FOR THE SPRING.

THE earth will welcome back, ere long, the warm
returning sun,
And the sparrow's plaintive whistle tell that Winter's race is
run !
Soon shall the willow's buds expand, the brown fields re-
appear,
The robin's sprightly carol hail the morning of the year !
Again the gray old forest trees put forth their tender leaves ;
Again the snowy pigeon coo upon the mossy eaves ;
Again the voice of Spring shall bid the loosened streamlet
flow,
And wake to life once more the flowers that sleep beneath
the snow.

Before the sweet, south winds diffuse their odors o'er the
land,
Before the early fisher's bark, departing, leaves the strand,
God grant that Peace, with angel smile, shall gladden shore
and sea !
God grant that, flung to every breeze, the banner of the
free,
Without one star's pure lustre dimmed, one tint of morning
paled,
In bright folds wave and rustle, by no traitor hand assailed !
And on the cannon planted hill the straying cattle graze ;
While wheat-fields mark the plain where shone the camp-
fire's nightly blaze.

.

REMUNERATION.

THE pearl that gleams beneath the wave
With purest light, and well repays
The patient toil by which 't is won,
Lies hidden from the diver's gaze.

Searching amid the watery waste,
Long time, with cheerful heart, he braves
The whirling currents of the sea,
The fury of the dashing waves ;
And disappointments must be his ;
And many a hard day's labor be
Unpaid, before the sparkling prize
Is wrested from its native sea.

So he who, from the sea of truth
Would cull the gems that glisten there,
Must feel the wrath of sorrow's storm,
And breast the troubled waves of care.

Yet, hopeful still, through sun and shower
He presses on, for, hardships past,
Full well he knows his efforts shall
Secure the pearl of price at last.

²THE LAST OF THE HOUSEHOLD.

ONLY a plain tombstone of white marble ; but the name upon it had caught my eye, and kneeling beside it, I read the inscription :

“ Sacred to the memory of
FREDERICK COMPTON,
who died Jan. 15, 18—. Aged 36.

“ Here is our resting place; and here
The vain dream of ambition ends.
Amid Life’s scenes of hope and fear
Think whitherward thy journey tends.”

The shadows of a lingering August twilight were slowly deepening around the little village churchyard. Night had come with its refreshing coolness, and all was quiet as the hearts of the sleepers under the sod. The distant river, no longer glimmering in the fervid sun, showed dark and cool through the fringe of willows on its bank, without a ripple to disturb its surface. The chirp and hum of insects were growing fainter, and the harvesters had gone home from the yellow field on the neighboring hill. The east was aglow with moonrise, and the stars were coming out in the sky, and still I lingered in that lonely place of graves.

Fred Compton had been my brother by adoption, and now, kneeling there in the hush of evening, my mind went back, as in a dream, over all the years of our boyhood.

Our home had been on the bank of a clear, New England lake. Away to the north rose a wild, lonely hill, where the foxes barked at night, and over whose rugged summit I used to watch the shadows of the clouds sweeping

²Published in the *Maine Farmer*, October, 1863.

swift as the hawk that was always sailing around it. I remembered the old house, with its mossy roof and walls blackened by the storms that for sixty winters had beaten upon it. The hardy pioneer who erected it, long since finished his labors, and lay down to rest. Many have dwelt there since ; from hand to hand the old house passed, until my father became its possessor.

But we were not sole occupants, for the old house had other tenants that, like the Gipsies of the Old World, had settled upon the manor without the consent of its lord. In the dilapidated cornice the strange, squeaking bats made their home. At sunset, the chimney-swallows took their short flights with shrill twitter ; and sometimes when Fred and I lay awake at night, we used to hear them rumbling in the flue with a sound like distant thunder. When autumn had come, when the woods had stolen the warm hue of the hazy yellow sunlight asleep on the hills, and the muffled drumming of the partridge alone broke in upon the Sabbath stillness, the old house was enlivened through the moonlight nights by the chirp of a cricket that, like minstrel of old, paid for his lodging with his song.

I remembered the dear home group who used to gather around the old-fashioned fireplace after the labor of the day was over, and sit watching the ever-varying pictures that fancy portrayed in the crinkling coals. I seemed to behold again, lighted up by the ruddy glow of the firelight, those features upon which I had not gazed for years ; the pale, holy face of my mother, my father's sturdy form and bold countenance, and the curly hair and deep, thoughtful eyes of that adopted brother by whose grave I knelt. Never, in all the long, weary, eventful years that had

elapsed since I crossed the worn threshold and left my home for the sea, had the remembrance of that circle passed from my mind. Once, only, in all that time I had heard from home. A former acquaintance whom I casually met in a foreign country told me that my parents had both died two years before ; and that Fred, having completed the college course entered upon soon after my departure, was soon to be united in marriage to Carrie Clifton, whom I well remembered as our pretty little schoolmate. The news of our parents' death dealt a heavy blow to my heart. I had cherished the idea of returning with a fortune ; of supporting them in their age, and making restitution for every unfilial act by which I had given them pain. But one friend remained to me, and the hope of meeting my brother had cheered me on through all the ensuing years—years of captivity among Polynesian savages, and toil in Australian mines. And now, returning to the land of my birth, with a fortune far beyond my anticipations, how strange the providence by which I had encountered his grave in the obscure English town !

We had been playmates, and had loved each other well ; but no two characters could have been more dissimilar ; Fred so quiet, thoughtful and studious—I wild, reckless and disobedient. At school, Fred was always at the head of his class, while among our companions, I was the chosen leader in all our games ; and so it came about that at the age of sixteen, I, with my love of adventure, shipped for a whaling cruise in the South Pacific, while Fred, a year younger, was preparing for college. Little did I dream as the low line of land grew blue and hazy in the distance,

that I had bidden my friends an eternal farewell. With a heavy, aching heart, I arose and walked back to my hotel.

It was late at night when I reached the inn, and the family had retired. I was, therefore, obliged to defer making inquiry, as I was longing to do, in regard to the circumstances of my brother's death. Going to my room, I lay down, without undressing, and waited with feverish anxiety for the morrow. Morning came at last, and with the first glimpse of day I was astir. In reply to my eager inquiries, the landlord told me that Fred had come to the village two years before ; that he had rented a neat cottage near by and had supported himself and his little daughter, Carrie, then ten years of age, until the previous winter, when he died of a quick consumption, induced, probably, by his confined mode of life. The daughter, he told me, was living in the family of a Mr. Henderson, who, having no children, had adopted her and by whom she was already loved as though she were his own child.

Fred had a daughter then, and she so near me—the only being on earth in whose veins flowed the same blood that warmed my own. I was soon at the pleasant house occupied by the kind-hearted English couple, and there I saw for the first time my little niece. With the clear eye and broad, intellectual brow of her father, she possessed the graceful figure and sunny brown hair that I so well remembered as belonging to her mother. Her warm caresses, when I told my relationship, bespoke a nature as ardent as her father's had been. Sitting upon my knee, with her head lying on my shoulder, she told me how often her father had talked to her of "Uncle James," and sobbing, how her mother had died in America, of their

voyage across the ocean, and her father's death. Her sweet, confiding manner and childish affection would have won a harder heart than mine, and my love went out to the little orphan who seemed the only link to bind me to earth.

The friends whom I had hoped to meet had passed away from earth ; there remained no voice to welcome me back to my native land. My fortune was ample for the indulgence of my desires, and I resolved to make my home here, where I might be with my brother's child. Our love for Carrie was a bond of sympathy, and William and Mary Henderson willingly assented to my proposal to become their lodger. My effects were soon removed to my new home, and its quiet content, after so many years of suffering, toil and danger, was like a peaceful haven to a storm-tossed mariner. The six years following that fled away so like a dream of happiness are an oasis in the desert of my life. Carrie was my constant companion, and I lavished upon her all the wealth of love so long treasured up in my breast. Each day that added to her delicate and spiritual beauty, developed new charms of mind and heart, and every hour spent in her companionship served but to endear her the more to me. She was my idol, and though at times, as I saw her beauty grew more and more ethereal, a vague fear oppressed me, yet I thrust it away, and would not listen to its boding voice. Not till the seventh year of my sojourn in Alton came the crushing blow, and I knew that her soul was putting its mansion in order for departure.

It was spring when Carrie told me that death must, ere long, divide us. We were sitting at a window that looked

toward the west, and watching the shifting hues of the bright clouds where the sun was going down in an oriflamme of purple and gold. She bent to kiss the rough, embrowned hand enclasped in her own delicate fingers, and whispered, "Uncle James, I shall leave you soon; will you miss me much?"

Spring brightened into summer, the summer passed, and autumn perfected the work of the season. Hedges were red with the ripened haws, and fields glittered at morning with the evanescent jewels of the frost. Her life was declining with the glories of the year.

It was late autumn when Carrie died—a cold and dreary night of drenching, November rain. Without, the sullen plash and drip of the cheerless storm, within, a sorrow-stricken group around the couch of a dying girl. At dawn, the gale lulled; the storm was over; and, fair and clear, the morning light looked in on her insensate form. In the gloom of the rattling storm, her disenthralled spirit had made its transit from time to eternity; and bright as the beautiful day was its home in the land of the immortal.

Again I stand on American soil. There is no eye to brighten at my coming; I am an alien in my childhood's home. But my country has need of me, and to-morrow I leave with my regiment to do battle in her sacred cause. Something at my heart tells me I shall not survive the conflict. It is well. Life has lost its charms to me, and, perishing in the struggle, only the patriotic stranger will mourn for the rough sailor who was the last of the household.

* * * * *

So, brokenly, closes the manuscript story. The journals that chronicled the terrible disaster to our arms at Ball's Bluff, and the heroic conduct of Col. Nevin's command on the ill-fated 8th of October, '61, contained the following record :

“ Mass. 15th. Wounded, James Compton, private, Co.—, mortally, since dead.”

SONG OF THE SPANISH MULETEER.

CHILL is the breath of the evening gales,
That over the wide sierra sweep,
And slowly the waning daylight fails,
Where the path o'erhangs the fearful steep ;
Far on the summit the condor clings
To his pinnacle, bathed in the sunset clear ;
But, blent with the voice of the torrent, rings
The song of the careless muleteer.

All day the mountain track we thread,
Till faint and fainter the day-gleams grow,
Till shine the silent stars o'erhead,
And village lights in the vale below ;
Nor heeds the hardy muleteer,
That keen and coldly the night winds blow,
While one to him than life more dear,
His coming waits in the vale below.

When soft and sweet the vesper peals
From convent bells, in the twilight dim,
Before her cross she humbly kneels,
And breathes her nightly prayer for him.
And little heeds the muleteer
The mountain storms of blinding snow,
While one to him than life more dear,
His coming waits in the vale below.

A DREAM OF SUMMER.

THE zephyrs, through the open door
Sweet with the breath of Summer, come ;
Around the busy hives the air
Is vocal with a drowsy hum.

Safe sheltered from the glowing sun,
The listless mowers seek repose ;
The water lilies, pearl and gold
At noon, their waxen petals close ;

The cattle, through the heat of day,
Beneath the cooling shade recline ;
The noontide locust's droning song
Rings shrilly from the fragrant pine.

I wake ; and lo ! 't is all a dream !
Stern Winter rules the snow-clad land ;
The birds are gone, the flowers are dead,
The trees all bare and leafless stand !

Frostwork bedecks my window pane,
And icy shackles bind the stream ;
My vision of the Summer-time
Has flown, like many another dream.

¹ A SNOW STORM IN THE COUNTRY.

IT is a snowy day up here among the quiet hills. Not like your snow storms in the city, where the flakes fall as if conscious that they are unwelcome visitors, and reluctant to mingle their purity with the mud of the streets, but a genuine old-fashioned, country snow-storm—spreading its vesture over the land that the rude hand of autumn so lately despoiled of its brighter garment, and pluming the trees upon the mountains until every dark and drooping fir is like a graceful woodland temple. The rocks and fence-posts are capped with ermine. The snow-birds drift noiselessly by, like a flight of larger flakes. After the storm you may track the rabbit and partridge in the woods, and every leap of the frisking squirrel will send a shower of fleecy wreaths earthward from the naked branches. A great wonder is working. The brown fields are enshrouded in stainless white, and the dirty roads have disappeared as if by enchantment.

Notwithstanding the many pleasant associations of the falling snow, it is one of those days whose very monotony induces a feeling of loneliness, and when any facility for passing away the time is gladly availed of. And so, after reading up all the old files and exhausting other resources of diversion, we turn to that encyclopedia of the poor man, the almanac for the year; essay to snicker at its time-honored witticisms, and read over again the Farmer's Calendar for December, concluding with the following excellent injunctions:

“Life is, at the best, but a brief span, and it becomes

¹ Published in the *Maine Farmer*, December, 1862.

thee, the dweller of a day, to use diligence. Kill hogs the last of this month."

We have finished its perusal, and have now no resort left but in watching the progress of the storm, and our own reflections.

Yes, winter is here. In the forests of the Penobscot the deer and moose are yarded, the lumberman's camp is erected, and his axe is ringing out the death-note of many a noble pine.

We knew of the winter's coming when we saw the aerial drove, collected in the heavens to follow in the track of the receding sun. We foresaw his approach when the waters of the pond frowned suddenly back to the leaden skies. The autumn woods presaged it when, at the summons of the cold north winds they drew down their many-hued banner in surrender. But the homeless! the starving destitute! Ah! to them there are other tokens of his advent which they have learned but too well to know and to dread. There are hollow eyes turned imploringly upon us from the squalid, shivering haunts of poverty, and gaunt hands are extended in mute supplication for food.

"From the low prayer of want and plaint of woe
O! never turn away thine ear!"

THE SOLDIER'S MOTHER.

THE gleam of the blossoming clover
In the meadows is fresh and fair,
And the twitter of the swallow
Rings joyously through the air.
The earth is bright in its beauty,
The song of the birds is gay,
And all nature shares in the gladness
Of the long, warm summer day.
But the soldier's mother is sitting
The open window beside,
And the tears in her mild eyes gather
As she thinks how her brave boy died.
And even the chirp of the cricket
Has loneliness for her ear ;
The earth may be fair and joyous,
But her loved one is not here.

THE LIGHT ON THE HILL.

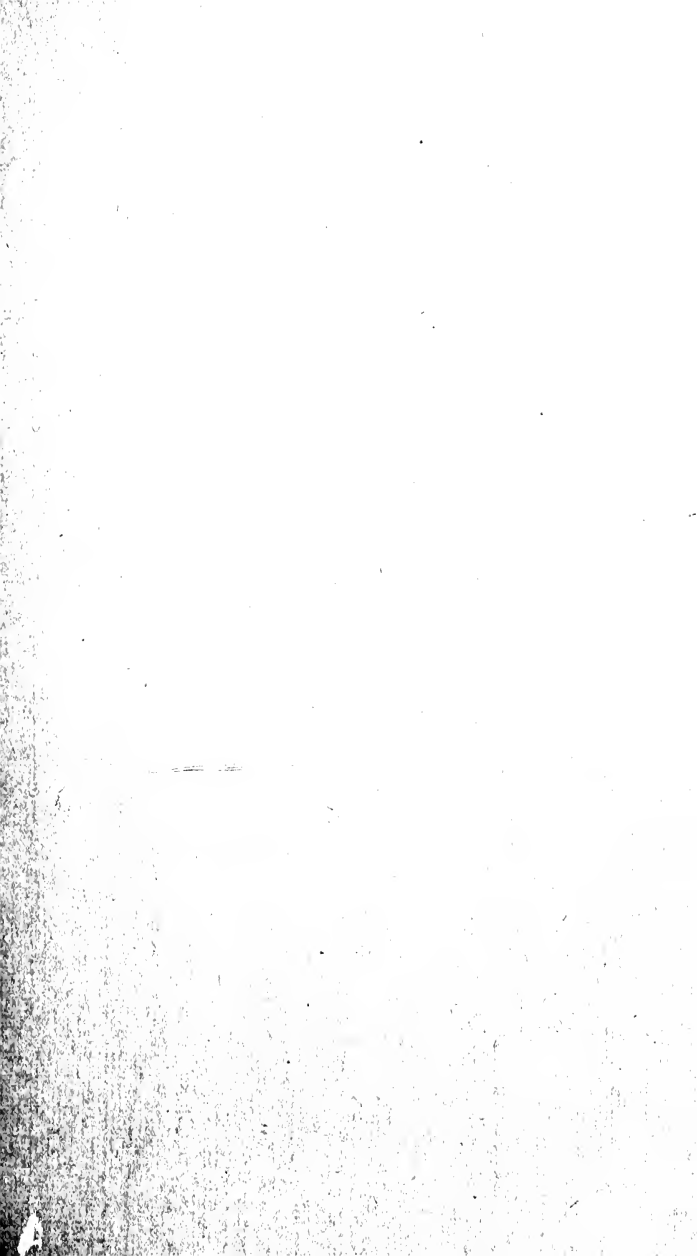
THE day is gone, and the night comes on
Chill with the dreary November rain,
And gazing into the stormy night,
Far upon the hills I behold a light
Shining steadily out from the window pane.

Many a night have I seen that light
Faintly gleaming, a far off spark,
As from place to place it moved about ;
Watched till the last red ray went out,
And the lonely hillside again was dark.

And marvel not if the tears are hot
On the cheek unused to tears before,
When the twilight cometh, gray and chill ;
There's one in the distant house on the hill
For whom the roses will bloom no more.

She hath said adieu to the lake's bright blue
And the sunlit woods, with their foliage sere,
And the winds to-night, in their airy strife,
Are mourning sadly for her whose life
Is fading away like the dying year.

FEB 10 1913



25 298
.E85
1912

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 020 994 026 7